

Guide
To Taking The Written Test For

ENTRY-LEVEL
CLERICAL SERIES



New York State Department of Civil Service
Albany, New York
2002

INTRODUCTION

The New York State Department of Civil Service has developed this Guide to familiarize you with the Entry-Level Clerical Series written tests. It provides a general description of the subject areas to be tested and the different types of questions you will likely see on any of the tests in this series. The Examination Announcement will specify the exact subject areas to be included on the specific test you will be taking.

The Entry-Level Clerical Series has an overall time allowance of 3 hours. The test is divided into five subject areas and the questions are designed to evaluate the following abilities:

1. **SPELLING:** These questions test your ability to spell words that are used in written business communications.
2. **ALPHABETIZING:** These questions test your ability to file material in alphabetical order.
3. **RECORD KEEPING:** These questions evaluate your ability to perform common record keeping tasks. The test consists of two or more "sets" of questions; each set concerning a different problem. Typical record keeping problems might involve the organization or collation of data from several sources; scheduling; maintaining a record system using running balances; or completion of a table summarizing data using totals, subtotals, averages and percents.
4. **CLERICAL OPERATIONS WITH LETTERS AND NUMBERS:** These questions test your skills and abilities in clerical operations involving alphabetizing, comparing, checking and counting. The questions require you to follow the specific directions given for each question which may involve alphabetizing, comparing, checking and counting given groups of letters and/or numbers.
5. **USING A DIRECTORY:** These questions test your ability to keep directory records and to supply accurate information to callers. The questions require you to incorporate name and/or room changes into a current telephone directory and to answer questions, such as those that would be asked by callers, about the information contained in the directory listing.

The Examination Announcement will list two or more of the above subject areas to be included in the written test you will be taking. All written tests in this series include CLERICAL OPERATIONS WITH LETTERS AND NUMBERS.

The remainder of this guide explains how you are tested in each of these subject areas. A **TEST TASK** is provided for each subject. This is an explanation of how a question is presented and how to correctly answer it. Be sure to read each one carefully.

You will also be given at least one **SAMPLE QUESTION** for each subject area. It will be of the type that you will see on the actual test. The **SOLUTION** and correct answer are provided after each question. You should study the question and its solution until you understand how it works.

SUBJECT AREA 1

SPELLING: These questions test your ability to spell words that are used in written business communications.

TEST TASK: You are given questions that contain a list of words. You must determine which, if any, of the words is misspelled.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

Which one of the following words is misspelled?

- A. manageable
- B. circumstants
- C. legality
- D. None of the above is misspelled

The answer is B.

SOLUTION: To answer this question, you must examine each of the words. The words "manageable" (choice A) and "legality" (choice C) are spelled correctly. The word "circumstants" (choice B) is misspelled. The correct spelling is "circumstance".

SUBJECT AREA 2

ALPHABETIZING: These questions test your ability to file material in alphabetical order.

TEST TASK: You will be provided with a list of names. You must put the names into alphabetical order.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

Of the following, which one should be THIRD in an alphabetic file?

- A. Docker, John
- B. Decker, Jane
- C. Dinckman, June
- D. Dockman, James

The answer is A.

SOLUTION: To answer this question, you must first put the names into alphabetical order. "Decker, Jane" would be first. "Dinckman, June" would be second. "Docker, John" would be third followed by "Dockman, James". The question asks for the third name on the list. The answer is "Docker, John," (choice A).

SUBJECT AREA 3

RECORD KEEPING: These questions test your ability to perform common record keeping tasks.

TEST TASK: The questions in this subject area are contained in two or more sets. Each set presents a different problem. Typical record keeping problems might involve:

- organization or collation of data from several sources
- scheduling
- maintaining a record system using running balances
- completion of a table summarizing data using totals, subtotals, averages and percents

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

The following two questions are based on the table below

NUMBER OF AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENTS BY LOCATION AND CAUSE (1998)				
CAUSE	LOCATION 1		LOCATION 2	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Road Conditions	10	20	25	42
Drunk Drivers	20	40	5	8
Speeding	15	30	15	25
Unknown	5	10	15	25
TOTALS	50	100	60	100

QUESTION 1:

Which one of the following is the **SECOND** highest cause of accidents for both locations combined?

- A. Road Conditions
- B. Drunk Drivers
- C. Speeding
- D. Unknown

The answer is C

SOLUTION: To answer this question, you must first add the number from location 1 to the number from location 2 for each accident cause. Then, you must rank the causes from highest to lowest based on the totals you obtain. You can then determine the second highest cause of accidents for both locations combined. In this example, "Road Conditions" (choice A) would be the highest cause of accidents with 35. The second highest cause of accidents is "Speeding" (choice C) with 30. The correct answer is "Speeding" (choice C).

QUESTION 2:

The average number of automobile accidents per week that occurred in Location 2 in 1998 (52 weeks) was most nearly

- A. 0.8
- B. 1.2
- C. 2.1
- D. 5.2

The answer is B

SOLUTION: To answer this question, you must divide the total number of accidents in location 2, (60), by 52 weeks. The answer, rounded to the nearest tenth is 1.2 (choice B).

SUBJECT AREA 4

CLERICAL OPERATIONS WITH LETTERS AND NUMBERS: These questions test your skills and abilities in clerical operations involving alphabetizing, comparing, checking and counting. The questions require you to follow the specific directions given for each question which may involve alphabetizing, comparing, checking and counting given groups of letters and/or numbers.

TEST TASK: You are given questions, which require you to follow specific directions given for each question. Each question may involve alphabetizing, comparing, checking and counting given groups of letters and/or numbers.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

QUESTION 1:

How many pairs of the following groups of letters are exactly alike?

BRFQSX	BRFQSX
ACDOBJ	ACDOBJ
RPTQVS	RPTQVS
ZUYRVB	ZUYRVB
SPQRAS	SQRPAS
HVCBWR	HVCRWB

- A. 2
- B. 3
- C. 4
- D. 5

The answer is B.

SOLUTION: To answer this question you must compare the column of letter groups on the left to the column of letter groups on the right. BRFQSX, RPTQVS and ZUYRVB of the left column are exactly like BRFQSX, RPTQVS and ZUYRVB of the right column. The other groups of letters are not exactly alike so the answer is 3 (choice B).

QUESTION 3:

Which one of the following letters is as far after C as T is after O in the alphabet?

- A. G
- B. H
- C. I
- D. J

The answer is B.

SOLUTION: Count how many letters are between O and T in the alphabet. There are 4: P, Q, R and S. There are also 4 letters between C and H: D, E, F and G. The answer is H (choice B).

QUESTION 2:

In the following sentence, how many words contain letters that appear more than once in that word?

"Right around April Fool's Day, the daffodils and crocuses start to emerge and cheer us up after a long winter."

- A. 5
- B. 6
- C. 7
- D. 8

The answer is B.

SOLUTION: To answer this question, look at each word to see how many contain the same letter at least twice. The words that do are: "Fool's", "daffodils", "crocuses", "start", "emerge", and "cheer". The total number of words is 6. The answer is 6 (choice B).

QUESTION 4:

In the following list of numbers, how many times does 8 come just after 6 when 6 comes just after an odd number?

6325687253494236844576842396868

- A. 2
- B. 3
- C. 4
- D. 5

The answer is C.

SOLUTION: To answer this question, you must determine the number of times 8 follows 6 when 6 follows an odd number. There are 4 occasions where 8 follows 6 and the number 6 follows an odd number. They are 568, 368, 768 and 968. The answer is 4 (choice C).

SUBJECT AREA 5

USING A DIRECTORY: These questions test your ability to keep directory records and to supply accurate information to callers.

TEST TASK: You will be provided with a telephone directory and a list of changes, and you will be asked to incorporate name and/or room changes into the directory. You will be asked to answer questions such as those that would be asked by callers about the information contained in the directory listing.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

Example: This question is based on the DIRECTORY and LIST OF CHANGES shown below:

DIRECTORY					
NAME	RM. NO.	EXT.	NAME	RM. NO.	EXT.
Adams, Dave	123	1234	Charles, Bob	126	9109
Brown, Bill	125	5678	Davis, Ann	128	1112
Brull, Betty	142	5768	Diaz, Angel	134	2212
Calvin, Ed	155	2314	Evans, Sue	127	9502
Cerra, Lisa	116	4312	Frank, Chris	151	3456

LIST OF CHANGES in effect today:

All calls for persons not listed above should be referred to Ann Davis in Personnel.

Bill Brown is on vacation; his calls should be referred to Dave Adams whose extension has been changed to 8737.

QUESTION: To which one of the following extensions should a call for Marc Evans be directed?

- A. 1112
- B. 1234
- C. 5678
- D. 8737

Answer is A.

SOLUTION: To answer this question, you must first determine that Marc Adams is not listed in the directory above, and that calls for people not so listed should be referred to Ann Davis in Personnel. Find Ann Davis in the directory; her extension is 1112 (choice A).

CONCLUSION

You and your feelings about tests have a great deal to do with how you perform on a test. Some people get so tense and nervous that they don't do as well as they could. They forget things they know or make simple mistakes. The following suggestions should help you overcome these problems.

- Study and review this Guide to become familiar with the test contents.
- Give yourself plenty of time to do what you need to do before the test starts. Arrive at the test room a little ahead of the starting time.
- Try to relax just before the test starts.
- Listen carefully to the instructions the Monitors give you. Carefully read all instructions on the Candidate Directions you are given at the test as well as information on the covers of the test booklets.
- Try to keep calm, cool and collected throughout the test.
- Keep track of time.